

HIDDEN POISON AND BODY OF ERROR (3)

An editorial by Reuel Lemmons, in Firm Foundation, Sept. 17, 1963

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Brother Ketcherside's third installment of his reply to our editorial of June 11 appears elsewhere in this issue. Read it first; then this reply.

9. "Brother K thinks all the sons of God are in the church of Christ but they are not all in one corral . . . Brother K should tell us what other corrals the Lord has sheep in besides the church of Christ." We hope the reader has access to the June 11 Firm Foundation. He will note that Ketcherside's reply is a diversion from the argument presented. It was stated that every Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian preacher in America preaches that the sons of God are all in the church of Christ. Everyone of them will "Amen" Ketcherside and jeer a gospel preacher. The reason is that they do not have the same concept that you and I have of what is the church of Christ. Neither does Brother K. His views concerning "every sincere conscientious person on the face of the earth who believes in Jesus as the Son of God is God's child and my brother in prospect" align him more with them than with us. To the readers of this review we believe it will be evident that Brother K does not actually know where the boundaries of the church of Christ are. The bitterness with which he attacks the church, and parades certain flaws and faults portrays a misconception. He does not know the church. Isolated instances of wrong attitudes he seeks to make typical of the whole body.

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While these may have been typical of the little faction with which he was formerly associated, he is completely mistaken, and does not know the church, if he thinks these isolated instances represent the feelings and attitude of the entire brotherhood.

10. "The Roman Catholics, Mormons, Baptists, and scores of others have 'believed the report' and have 'climaxed the manifestation of that faith by baptism.' Has God made them our brothers because we have a common father? Does the fellowship include all these and more?"

Brother Ketcherside did not answer the objection to his doctrine, and he knows it. The objection he was to have answered is this: "Brother K says, 'Baptism is no part of apostolic doctrine, and it is not a part of the gospel.'" He further says, "Preaching the gospel is one thing and telling people to be baptized is another." He asks, "What is it to obey the gospel?" and answers: "They have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" His conclusion: "So belief of the report made concerning Jesus is obeying the gospel, climaxed by manifestation of that faith by baptism . . . this is the only test of faith." This is an exact quotation from the June 11 Firm Foundation. Why did he not reply to it? He attempts on one hand to hold some shred of his former faith and at the same time tries to make the boundaries of the kingdom so broad they will include the "sincere sprinkled" and any others

who "believe the report" of the apostles that Jesus is the Son of God. Roman Catholics, Mormons, Baptists and scores of others have done this. According to his own statements they are in the kingdom.

Our objection to his doctrine has no reference to isolated instances of people in the denominations who may have become children of God through satisfactory obedience to the gospel. Our objection was, and is, that his doctrine that baptism is no part of the gospel, and that obeying the gospel does not include baptism, forces him to accept as brethren every single soul in all the denominations who "believe the report" of the apostles concerning the sonship of Jesus. Here is where the poison is hidden. The reader may be annoyed with the number of times we drive home the facts that Ketcherside's doctrine would admit to "the fellowship" the "pious unimmersed," and that it makes baptism no part of the gospel, but these two points are heart and core of his false teaching. We would that he repudiated them, but until he does we want all to see that they are (1) contrary to the scriptures, (2) contain a body of error, and (3) contain hidden poison.

11. "His entire contention that unity is equated with brotherhood is false." Brother K does not refute the charge; he simply restates his position. The Corinthians were all in "the fellowship" in the sense that they had all been born again, but they did not have unity, as evidenced by Paul's rebuke in the first chapter. Ketcherside thinks unity is forced by fellowship. He goes Christian science on the question of dis-unity, simply denying its existence. In his speech before the Christian Church convention he said, "Actually, however, we have a greater unity than we have realized, because unity is the gift of God through the Spirit. Our task is not so much to create unity as to recognize it." The Universalists teach that we are already all saved; all we need is for someone to tell us about it. Brother K thinks we are already all united; all we need is for someone to tell us about it. The Bible teaches that we become brothers by the new birth, but the Bible does not teach that "once you have it you can't lose it"—his unity, that is.

12. We will not restate the 12th point here. Suffice it to say that he did not attempt to refute a very clear point. He simply uses the opportunity to get before the readers of the Firm Foundation a summarizing statement of his professed objectives. With these professed objectives every sincere Christian is in hearty agreement. If he would stick to these and leave the unscriptural doctrines herein reviewed alone there would be little room for difference. We do not agree

with his equating of brotherhood with fellowship, nor his equating of brotherhood with unity. A recognition of brotherhood does not mean a recognition of fellowship. God has cursed children (2 Peter 2:14) but in such instances childhood does not mean fellowship. We are in hearty accord with the objective of getting estranged brethren to discuss differences in love, and as loving brethren, rather than as warring aliens, but love is not synonymous with fellowship. Love seeks to eliminate the barriers to fellowship—not ignore them. Brother Ketcherside's present theology makes so little of doctrine that it will never create a

conscience against things that are doctrinally wrong— instrumental music for instance. It is when he makes the door to the kingdom more broad than the Lord has made it, and when he tries to remove from the gospel the command to be baptized for the remission of sins that we must cross swords with him. His pen and voice could be a power for good in the world if he could but recognize the points at which his present position (1) contradicts the scripture, (2) contains a body of error, and (3) holds hidden poison.
